
MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2026

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Sally Gruppen, Mayor Pro Tem
John Query, Commission Chair
Thom Parker, Commissioner
Lynette Lam, Commissioner
Ashley Kiekintveld, Commissioner
Sue Lucas, Commissioner
Sabina Otteman, Commissioner

CITY STAFF: Kevin Plockmeyer, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director
Susan Moore, Administrative Assistant

GUEST: Melinda Whitten, MCSA Group

I. Sabina Otteman – New Commission Member

Commission Chair John Query welcomed Sabina Otteman to the Commission.

II. Approval of December 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Motion: Sue Lucas

Support: Thom Parker

All in favor, minutes approved.

III. Lawrence Park Playground Concept Design & Budget

Melinda Whitten from MCSA Group presented preliminary concept designs of new playground equipment for Lawrence Park with an estimated total cost of \$1,080,892.30. As there are competing priorities for the next parks improvement project – this and the replacement of the Vande Luyster Gazebo – these plans are to provide information on what the new playground could look like and how much it could potentially cost and to get the commission's feedback.

IV. Vande Luyster Gazebo Follow-Up

Melinda Whitten also presented an updated design concept for the Vande Luyster Gazebo that included suggestions made by the commission at their last meeting. The updated estimated grand total for this project is now \$480,345.78. Commissioners were pleased with this as well as the Lawrence Park playground design plans.

V. FY2027 Budget

Kevin Plockmeyer reported that Hoogland Park is now complete (outside of some punch list items to be addressed this spring; staff were asked to make sure the dog waste receptacle was reinstalled). Staff are beginning the budget process for the next fiscal year (7/1/26-6/30/27). From an operational standpoint, he is not recommending significant changes, and this includes string trimming at the cemetery (another 3-year contract has been bid out for \$40,000); staff plan to maintain the level of service expected by the community. For parks capital improvement projects, there is approximately \$450K remaining in the City Park Improvement Fund. Staff are recommending focusing on setting aside funding for the replacement of the playground at Lawrence Park (it has far more use than the gazebo and is starting to show age/safety concerns) while planning to make significant repairs to the gazebo. Timeframe potentially fall 2027/summer 2028 for playground construction at LP. Gazebo repairs & maintenance would be covered from within the operating budget and could begin this fall/next spring. Commissioners agreed and staff will begin that process.

V. Rates & Fees

Kevin Plockmeyer walked through the cemetery rate fee changes staff are recommending along with a spreadsheet of other local municipal cemetery fees. The city is still on the lower side in comparison, and the following changes are recommended:

- Adult Grave (resident only): Increase from \$350 to \$450
- Adult Burial: Increase from \$450 to \$525 or \$550
- Cremains Burial: Increase by \$50 to \$125
- Saturday Burial Fee: Increase from \$200 to \$300
- Columbarium Purchase: Increase both resident & non-resident rates, currently \$550 & \$1,700, respectively.

Commissioners did not object to these recommendations, and staff will include them in the budgeting process.

VI. 5-Year Recreation Plan Update

Kevin Plockmeyer reported that the 5-Year Recreation Plan process will begin again with the assistance of MCSA Group. There will be more focus on community surveys instead of public open houses as these were not well attended last time. Melinda Whitten and Tiffany Smith (MCSA Group) will attend future meetings as well as the process kicks off & moves forward.

VII. Cemetery Parks Ordinance Review Item – Domestic Animals

The commission has been asked to consider banning dogs from the city's cemeteries in response to incidents of dog walkers failing to restrain/clean up after their dogs at a loved ones' grave site. While staff are sympathetic to this issue, they would not be able to enforce such a restriction. Commissioner Sabina Otteman noted that at Lincoln Cemetery, the dog waste receptacle is currently inaccessible due to construction. Commission was not in favor of a ban; staff will make receptacles more accessible and look at signage solutions.

VIII. Burial Report:

Burials: Lincoln: Resident – 3	Non-Resident – 9
Felch: Resident – 2	Non-Resident – 2
Sales: Lincoln: Resident – 0	Non-Resident – 3
Felch: Resident – 5	Non-Resident – 5
Sellbacks: 3 plots at Lincoln	
Transfers: 3 plots at Lincoln	

Other Items:

- **Church Street Construction Project:** Kevin Plockmeyer provided an update on this ongoing project that is currently being done in the Lincoln Cemetery area of the overall project scope.
- **Paw Paw Footbridge Park Vegetation Management:** City Council approved a contract to continue this project again in 2026. The Outdoor Discovery Center will be focusing on controlling sumac (it is a 3–5-year process to get that under control).
- **Burial Plot Question:** Mayor Pro Tem Sally Gruppen asked for clarification on how many burials are allowed in one cemetery plot. Kevin Plockmeyer will check with Cemetery Parks Supervisor Mike Bronkhorst. Staff will follow up with the commission on this.

The meeting was adjourned @ 6:20 PM.

NEXT MEETING: Next regularly scheduled meeting is Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 5:00 PM.

Cemetery-Parks Commission Meeting
City Hall, 2nd Floor Council Chambers
21 South Elm Street
Zeeland, Michigan 49464

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RECORDED BY:

Susan Moore

Susan Moore, Administrative Assistant

City Hall
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Zeeland, Michigan 49464

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